

JOB DESCRIPTION

TITLE: Housing Solutions Officer

POST NO:

DEPARTMENT: Population Wellbeing

DIVISION: Housing Needs Service

RESPONSIBLE TO: Housing Solutions Team Manager

GRADE: L7

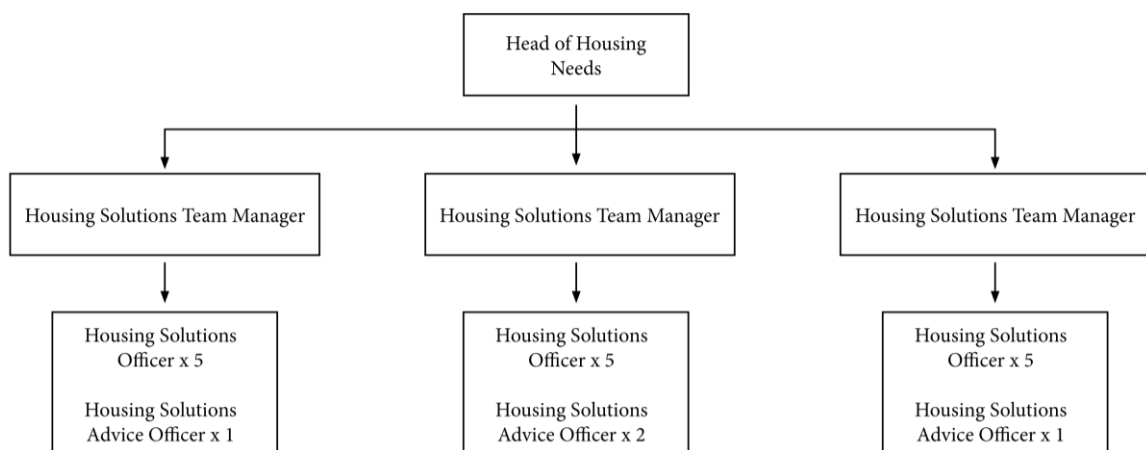
PURPOSE OF POST

To deliver an efficient, high quality professional service to all users on housing related matters with the primary focus on preventing homelessness whilst ensure that care and support needs are met in accordance with the wider council's policies and working collaboratively with internal and external partners for those with complex needs .

To investigate into clients circumstances thoroughly and make decision in accordance with the council's statutory duties under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, Housing Act 1996 Part VII and related amendments, case law and statutory guidance/instruments.

To promote and raise awareness and deliver training on homelessness and procedures and hold portfolio to internal and external organisations, and deliver an out of hours service on a rota basis.

ORGANISATION CHART



PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

%

1	Manage caseloads and undertake all appropriate investigations necessary to make sound timely decisions. To create and agree clear, achievable personalised housing plans, complete financial affordability assessments, identify support needs and co-ordinating the support through partner organisations. Monitor and report the progress within set targets. This will involve dealing with and producing correspondence and reports on confirming decisions, dealing with complaints, MP enquiries, FOI's LGO and preparing casework for Members' Panel meetings. Where necessary arrange emergency/temporary accommodation To ensure that duties are discharged timely and correctly in accordance with legislation and ensure that the accommodation duty is brought to an end accordingly.	40
2	Identify clients with support needs, treat them respectably, thoughtfully and sensitively. Liaise with the appropriate support agencies to obtain services, building and working closely with a network of partners both internal and external to the council to support people with financial or other care support needs. Advocate/mediate in negotiating with such partners, including landlords, external agencies, health professionals, education and legal arenas to promote self-sufficiency and stability. Where necessary take a lead or coordinating role in the achievement of suitable outcomes including establish eligibility for other services e.g. employment support, stronger families, flying start and obtain consent to make referrals where appropriate. Making referrals to hostels and partners and record outcomes. Attend court with individuals to assist with defence of illegal eviction or defective notice, stay of evictions or similar. empower by enabling access to key support services: employment, education, health and wellbeing to promote self- sufficiency and stability.	30
3	Adopt and deliver a cooperative multi-agency approach with relevant statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies and bodies, both internal and external to the Council to ensure the best interests of the client are ensured, particularly where safeguarding of child protection or physical/mental health issues are concerned. Prepare chronologies and reports for safeguarding and serious case reviews, and attend meetings where required.	10
4	Complete affordability assessments using financial tools, maximise income by ensuring and individuals and families are awarded all entitled welfare benefits and keep them under review and maintain accurate casework records for monitoring and responding to enquiries. Continuously develop a wide range of tools to help achieve best outcomes for individuals to prevent homelessness	10
5	Support with the development and delivery of training and/or awareness raising events and materials for staff, colleagues, partners and the public relating to homelessness and the work of the Housing Solutions Team Manager, Including mentoring to less experienced colleagues. Promote in the community awareness and good practice in relation to homelessness issues and the services available in accordance with the requirements of the Community Legal Service Quality Mark.	5
6	To be available to work outside of normal working hours service on a rota basis and assess the council's duties to those present as homeless and ensuring that accommodation is made available to those the council has a statutory duty to accommodate.	5

DIMENSIONS

Supervisory Management Not a direct Line Manager, however will provide support on day to day aspects, mentor and buddy up with new and existing members and the lower graded roles within the team.

Financial Resources N/A

Physical Demands/resources: This post does not require any particular or unusual physical effort (other than the normal negotiation of the accessible areas of premises, travelling, climbing stairs, etc). Responsible for computer, printers and office equipment

Working Environment The service is mainly office-based and delivered predominantly from the Council's Customer Service Centre in the Town Hall. Face to face interviews are common; external and home visits are required where necessary; interviews will predominantly be office-based and will also be home-based or within other buildings/ institutions, e.g. prisons, hospitals, etc.

The post holder will carry out agile working in line with Council policy and is expected to be able to work and perform well with minimal supervision.

The post holder will have contact with clients/ members of the public who can be potentially emotional and aggressive as well as those suffering from various forms of physical or mental health issues, ex-offenders and non-English speaking clients. The post requires the post holder to be able to participate actively on their own and in a team setting and have a strong demonstrated commitment to customer care and quality services.

CONTEXT

This post forms part of the Housing Solutions Team which in turn forms part of the Housing Services department. The Team provides the full range of housing options and homelessness services as statutorily required under Homeless Reduction Act 2017 including the Housing Act 1996 part VII and related legislation.

The post holder will be involved extensively in casework, taking responsibility and accountability for their case decisions. Homelessness prevention work is a key area and will include providing appropriate advice and assistance; providing advocacy and support to clients including defence of possession proceedings; attending court where necessary; investigating and dealing with cases of potential/actual illegal evictions and landlord harassment; offering and involving mediation services and relevant agencies including those providing legal advice; utilising and administering the various financial initiatives available including rent deposits/rent in advance schemes including liaison and arrangements with clients and landlords; making recommendations for approval of those initiatives.

To work proactively as part of a front line team to provide support to households at risk of homelessness and at the earliest opportunity assist them by investigating the root cause of their housing situation and identify support needs and a range of housing options or advice.

In order to minimise the use of LBC temporary accommodation the post holder will explore all options and make arrangements with voluntary, private and statutory support/ housing providers to secure interim or permanent accommodation in non-LBC accommodation and, where appropriate, make an internal recommendation and/ or referral for a client to receive a LBC temporary accommodation placement.

As part of the Council's statutory function the post holder is required to participate in the out of hours' duty rota to handle emergency enquiries and make emergency arrangements for clients.

In order to provide a high quality service the post holder is required to demonstrate a high standard of cooperation, communication and teamwork at all times towards team members, Council colleagues and all other internal and external parties that they come into contact with and hold portfolios for internal and external key partners.

The post holder is required to be particularly flexible due to the volume and complexity of work and the caseload per officer that will vary from time to time depending on the work coming into the service. Officers need to be able to adapt and change well in situations where staffing resources and workloads vary; evening work is rarely required but is necessary from time to time, e.g. to attend Panel meetings during and out of normal working hours, to cope with high workload peaks.

Because of the nature of this job, it will be necessary for the appropriate level of criminal record disclosure to be undertaken. Therefore, it is essential in making your application that you disclose whether you have any pending charges, convictions, bind-overs or cautions and, if so, for which offences. This post will be exempt from the provisions of Section 4 (2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders 1974 (Exemptions) (Amendments) Order 1986. Therefore, applicants are not entitled to withhold information about convictions which for other purposes are 'spent' under the provision of the Act, and, in the event of the employment being taken up, any failure to disclose such convictions will result in dismissal or disciplinary action by the Authority. The fact that a bind-over or caution has been recorded against you will not necessarily debar you from consideration for this appointment.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

This acts as selection criteria and gives an outline of the types of person and the characteristics required to do the job.

Essential (E):- without which candidate would be rejected

Desirable (D):- useful for choosing between two good candidates

Please make sure, when completing your application form, you give clear examples of how you meet the essential and desirable criteria.

Attributes	Essential	How Measured	Desirable	How Measured
Experience	Demonstrable experience of working in a busy pressurised environment and managing client casework at a specialist level, working with vulnerable people with complex needs	1, 2,	Working in a local authority within a housing remit or a housing association	1.2
	Demonstrable experience of partnership working, liaison and negotiation with external agencies and partners.	1, 2		

Skills/ Abilities	Able to manage a complex client caseload and ad-hoc cases	1, 2,3	Complex legal casework skills	1, 2
	Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, both written and verbal, able to: - Communicate with a wide range of clients and customers, including those with demanding/challenging behaviour and multiple needs; providing advice and support - Provide a high level customer care, understanding and empathy - Effectively interview clients and customers to gain relevant and appropriate information - Interpret correspondence accurately and respond appropriately - Produce good quality, accurate correspondence, decision letters, case notes and reports. - Pass on knowledge to and train colleagues	1, 2, 5	Private rented sector casework skills	1, 2
	Able to identify a client's support needs/ vulnerability issues and take appropriate action to ensure needs are met.	1, 2		
	Able to deal with challenging and disengagement behaviour in a calm and professional manner to achieve a positive turn-around.	1, 2		
	Able to maintain administrative and IT systems and processes accurately, thoroughly and speedily able to manipulate excel spreadsheets.	1, 2		
	Able to produce reports and interpret financial data, maintain accurate data and report statistical performance information and data.	1, 2		
	Abe to work with minimal supervision when required and able to plan and prioritise own work and the work of others in relation to multi-agency partners,	1, 2		

Equality Issues	Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of equality issues and legislation and, in particular, how they impact on service(s) provided and able to integrate equality policies into service delivery.	1, 2		
Specialist Knowledge	Detailed knowledge of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, Housing Act 1996 part VII, Retaliatory Eviction & Deregulation Act 2015, Landlord and Tenant, asylum and immigration and related homelessness legislation/ Code of Guidance, statutory instruments, case law and council policies Demonstrable experience working with and issuing decisions under the homelessness legislation i.e. Homeless Reduction Act 2017, Housing Act 1996, 2002, Retaliatory Eviction & Deregulation Act 2015, Localism Act 2011 and related legislation. Able to maintain up to date knowledge of legislation, guidance and case law and interpret and apply to policies and procedures	1, 2, 5 1, 2, 5 1,2	Knowledge of Family law, Children's Act Children's Act Housing and welfare benefits Employment Support Skills Care Act and other related legislation,	1, 2
Education and Training	Institute of Housing, NVQ Housing, or other relevant qualification or equivalent experience/education/Training	1,2,4		
Other requirements	Able to travel within and beyond the Council's geographical boundaries. Able to participate in the Council's homelessness emergency out of hours' service on a 1 week in 15 rota basis, please stipulate how often Able to converse with ease with members of the public and provide effective help or advice in accurate and fluent spoken English	1, 2 1, 2 1, 2		

(1 = Application Form 2 = Interview 3 = Test 4 = Proof of Qualification 5 = Practical Exercise)

We will consider any reasonable adjustments under the terms of the Equality Act (2010) to enable an applicant with a disability (as defined under the Act) to meet the requirements of the post.

The Job-holder will ensure that Luton Borough Council's policies are reflected in all aspects of their work in particular those relating to:

- (i) Equal Opportunities
- (ii) Health and Safety
- (iii) Data Protection Act (2018) & General Data Protection Regulations (2018)